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Service Chiefs Ordered To Stop Public Debates

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Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara has ordered the armed services to stop taking their policy and strategy arguments to the public.

The new Pentagon boss is reportedly disturbed to find newspaper stories giving service views on policy matters that must be decided—or presumably have been decided—by the Joint Chiefs of Staff and their civilian superiors.

McNamara has told the chiefs that policy disputes must be handled only through proper, internal Pentagon channels.

New Policy Explained

Arthur Sylvester, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, today explained the new administration's position: "There will be full and free discussion of all policy disputes among the people who are supposed to argue and decide these things. Then a decision will be made, and we will expect everyone to abide by the decision. The public will be kept fully informed of these decisions, and we do not want the services then to carry on the arguments through the newspapers."

Among the first high officers reported to have felt the effect of the crackdown was Admiral Arleigh A. Burke, Chief of Naval Operations. A Burke speech discussing United States relations with the Soviet Union

was reported to have been rewritten to conform with the new policy.

The crackdown also has been felt on the lower echelons of the three services. Officers who had been willing in the past to explain policy problems now say they have been directed to stop talking.

Traced to Kennedy

Official information officers also are giving considerably less information than under the Eisenhower administration, and more time is spent clearing answers to questions with a variety of other agencies.

The crackdown is being traced to President Kennedy and his press secretary, Pierre Salinger. They apparently are trying to halt security leaks, particularly of intelligence matters, and public display of interservice rivalries.

Spokesman for the new Pentagon officials say they realize the crackdown will not succeed completely, but they believe any small measure of success will be worth the effort.